

The Doctrine of Being, or Ontology

“Being is the Absolute” marks the beginning of Philosophy

Pure Being for Hegel is the pure essentiality expressing the internal dynamics of a shape of consciousness which is as yet quite unself-conscious, unaware of itself. To grasp this as an object in order to determine its internal dynamics, Hegel must *enter into it* so as to be able to execute an immanent critique. But how can he do this if Pure Being represents such a shape of consciousness, standing at the very beginning of the development of self-consciousness? The history of philosophy provides the key to this kind of critique.

Philosophy is a part of a formation of consciousness which produces concepts which are responsive to logical critique as well as expressing a conception of the Absolute proper to the given shape of consciousness. So the history of philosophy manifests just the series of concepts which he required for the Logic. However, history is subject to contingencies and externalities and even if a social formation exactly corresponded to this pure essentiality, no real philosopher is going to be able to perfectly express the spirit of their times. But Logic is not an empirical science. Provided we are clear on the object we are considering, we can conduct a kind of thought experiment to determine a series of categories corresponding to an idealised history of philosophy.

This paragraph from the Doctrine of Being in the *Shorter Logic* is relevant to us here:

“In the history of philosophy the different stages of the logical idea assume the shape of successive systems, each based on a particular definition of the Absolute. As the logical Idea is seen to unfold itself in a process from the abstract to the concrete, so in the history of philosophy the earliest systems are the most abstract, and thus at the same time the poorest. The relation too of the earlier to the later systems of philosophy is much like the relation of the corresponding stages of the logical Idea: in other words, the earlier are preserved in the later: but subordinated and submerged. This is the true meaning of a much misunderstood phenomenon in the history of philosophy – the refutation of one system by another, of an earlier by a later. Most commonly the refutation is taken in a purely negative sense to mean that the system refuted has ceased to count for anything, has been set aside and done for. Were it so,

the history of philosophy would be, of all studies, most saddening, displaying, as it does, the refutation of every system which time has brought forth. Now although it may be admitted that every philosophy has been refuted, it must be in an equal degree maintained that no philosophy has been refuted. And that in two ways. For first, every philosophy that deserves the name always embodies the Idea: and secondly, every system represents one particular factor or particular stage in the evolution of the Idea. The refutation of a philosophy, therefore, only means that its barriers are crossed, and its special principle reduced to a factor in the completer principle that follows.

“Thus the history of philosophy, in its true meaning, deals not with a past, but with an eternal and veritable present: and, in its results, resembles not a museum of the aberrations of the human intellect, but a Pantheon of godlike figures. These figures of gods are the various stages of the Idea, as they come forward one after another in dialectical development.

“To the historian of philosophy it belongs to point out more precisely how far the gradual evolution of his theme coincides with, or swerves from, the dialectical unfolding of the pure logical Idea. It is sufficient to mention here, that logic begins where the proper history of philosophy begins. Philosophy began in the Eleatic school, especially with Parmenides. Parmenides, who conceives the absolute as Being, says that ‘Being alone is and Nothing is not’. Such was the true starting point of philosophy, which is always knowledge by thought: and here for the first time we find pure thought seized and made an object to itself.” (Shorter Logic §86n)

Now of course we cannot have the same understanding of Being as did Parmenides, and that is not really the point. We can determine the concept of Pure Being precisely in the sense *necessary* to make the starting point of philosophy, a concept which requires a thinker capable of philosophical thought, to think rigorously the first concept of philosophy which is utterly abstract in the sense that it contains nothing introduced from outside.

So what Hegel needs is not so much a real history as an *idealised* history. But in the same sense as any science sets out to determine the *necessary* movement, logic goes hand in hand with empirical observation and thought experiment, as Hegel explained in the foregoing quote.

Being, Nothing and Determinate Being

The concept of Pure Being we need, then, is that concept which expresses that something *is*, without any qualification, without attributing any quality, any here and now, just “pure being,” not to be anything, just to be. So in the terms of philosophy we are looking for the conception of the Absolute as just Being, not being anything in particular, just Being. A *capacity for philosophical thought* is required for this concept, because it is the ultimate abstraction, and the capacity for abstraction presupposes a certain development of society, so in that sense there is a presupposition. But the concept which forms the beginning of the Logic, and consequently, forms the subject matter of the Logic, is the concept of being utterly indeterminate

After having demonstrated that a beginning can not be made by the thought of anything, be that intuition or God or certainty or whatever, Hegel explains:

“The foregoing shows quite clearly the reason why the beginning cannot be made with anything concrete, anything containing a relation *within itself*. For such presupposes an internal process of mediation and transition of which the concrete, now become simple, would be the result. But the beginning ought not itself to be already a first *and* an other; for anything which is in its own self a first *and* an other implies that an advance has already been made. Consequently, that which constitutes the beginning, the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalyzable, taken in its simple, unfilled immediacy, and therefore *as being*, as the completely empty being.” (*Science of Logic* §114)

So the Logic begins with the claim that “Being is Absolute.” But one can no sooner consider this claim, and clarify just what is meant by this concept, Being, namely that it is utterly without determination, and that one is asked to think an empty concept, than we are driven to the realization that *Being is Nothing*. This is the first and classic example of this process of sceptical critique. If Being is the Absolute, then the Absolute is Nothing.

Hegel claims that philosophy proper began with Parmenides. Thales, who was alive about 140 years before Parmenides, could be claim that honor, but the very early philosophers of that time were still tied up with conceptions which are still not scientific, ideas about the priority of Earth, Fire, Water or Air, and so on. But philosophy proper began with Parmenides. According to Parmenides (c. 500 BCE):

“‘Thought, and that on account of which thought is, are the same. For not without that which is, in which it expresses itself, wilt thou find Thought, seeing that it is nothing and will be nothing outside of that which is.’ [and Hegel comments] That is the main point. Thought produces itself, and

what is produced is a Thought. Thought is thus identical with Being, for there is nothing beside Being, this great affirmation.” (*History of Philosophy*, D1)

And according to Hegel, Being passes over to Nothing. Hegel associates the claim that God is Nothing with Buddhism. In his history of philosophy he can't really pin a philosophy of Nothing on Pythagorus, for whom the Absolute was the *One*, or any Greek philosopher of the appropriate time. So the history of Greek philosophy did not quite follow the sequence suggested in the Doctrine of Being.

However, if the truth of Being is Nothing, and as Heraclitus showed Nothing is something, then the destruction of Being has led in fact to something, and this insight can be summed up in the maxim: “Everything is Becoming” or “Becoming is Absolute”: Here is how Hegel describes Heraclitus, drawing on the reports of Aristotle:

“For Heraclitus says: ‘Everything is in a state of flux; nothing subsists nor does it ever remain the same’. And Plato further says of Heraclitus: ‘He compares things to the current of a river: no one can go twice into the same stream’, for it flows on and other water is disturbed. Aristotle tells us that his successors even said ‘it could not once be entered’, for it changed directly; what is, is not again. Aristotle goes on to say that Heraclitus declares that ‘there is only one that remains, and from out of this all else is formed; all except this one is not enduring’. This universal principle is better characterized as *Becoming*, the truth of Being.” (*History of Philosophy*, D1)

But if Becoming is absolute, *something* must be becoming, so everything is a determinate being, not some abstraction or just a flow, but a determinate being, or “Determinate Being is Absolute,” or: “Everything is *some* thing.”

“Being is being, and nothing is nothing, only in their contradistinction from each other; but in their truth, in their unity, they have vanished as these determinations and are now something else. Being and nothing are the same; *but just because they are the same they are no longer being and nothing*, but now have a different significance. In becoming they were coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be; in determinate being, a differently determined unity, they are again differently determined moments.” (*Science of Logic* §187)

So here we have the succession of the first four concepts of the Logic: Being, Nothing, Becoming, Determinate Being. Determinate Being (or Being something)

turns out to be Quality, and Quality constitutes the first main subdivision of the Doctrine of Being.

I will not continue the theme of naming the different philosophers which Hegel associates with the different categories of the Logic, because the connection gets more and more tenuous as the narrative goes on. Really, Hegel has abstracted the logic from a study of a large number of projects, or concepts, and the real history of philosophy bears only a distant relation to the course of the Logic from here on.

Quality, Quantity and Measure

These first moments of the Logic: Being, Nothing, Becoming and Determinate Being belong to the category of Quality:

“Quality may be described as the determinate mode immediate and identical with Being – as distinguished from Quantity (to come afterwards), which, although a mode of Being, is no longer immediately identical with Being, but a mode indifferent and external to it. A something is what it is in virtue of its quality, and losing its quality it ceases to be what it is.” (*Shorter Logic* §90n)

So what we have to do with here is the dialectic of Quantity and Quality, which involves the Limit and takes us to the category of Measure.

Everything is in perpetual change; but through all this change don't we also have constancy? or is this constancy an illusion? Hegel says that an existent thing is first of all a Quality. If that Quality of a thing changes, then the thing is no longer the same, a 'qualitative' change has taken place.

The Limit is the first conception of this boundary between something being what it is or not. “Through the limit something is what it is, and in the limit it has its quality,” (*Science of Logic* §246) but this limit is the principle of the thing, which it therefore shares with the other thing, the negation of the negation of the limit. So through the limit they share, two things show themselves to be in principle one and the same.

Things can change, and yet we say that they remain what they are, just more or less of what they were before and remain so. This aspect of a thing which can change, but does not thereby constitute a change in its substratum, we call *Quantity*. So for example, if we are considering whether or not something is a fish, we might consider all sorts of predicates which can be attributed to the thing, such as size, shape, colour, weight, location and so on, and no matter how things may vary, they

would not cause us to deny or confirm that we have a fish; it would just be a large fish, or a round fish, or whatever. All these attributes are then Quantities. On the other hand, there may be predicates which can be attributed to the thing such that if they are changed then this will cause us to deny that we have a fish. Qualities like having scales, gills, a backbone, and so on, are not things which an animal can have more or less of; take away a fish's gills and it would not be the same kind of animal.

Now there are limits to this distinction between Quantity and Quality. We find that if we vary the size of something, or the degree of its adaptation to breathing air, beyond a certain point, then what was formally seen as solely a variation in Quantity and not touching the very nature of the thing itself, become transformed into Qualitative changes, and this is the famous transformation of Quantity into Quality.

Measure is defined as the unity of Quantity and Quality: something remains what it is up to a certain Measure, but beyond that Quantity becomes Quality; that is the measure of a thing.

A social practice of some kind may come to notice, for example, universities have observed over a period of time that more and more students do more and more paid employment. Surely beyond a certain point being a (full-time) university student loses the meaning it used to have and universities have to start redesigning their courses, their campus services, their arrangements for contact with staff and so on. But some Measure is needed before a decision is made to radically reconceive the idea of the university.

The limit is key. How can a 'student', as opposed to a 'worker doing part-time study', be defined? What should be counted? These questions of measure have to be answered before we can start to think about whether something needs to be done and what.

Without going into the vast passages on natural science and mathematics in this part of the Logic, there are a couple of critiques which have eternal relevance.

The first of these is Hegel's critique of the Newtonian concept of *force*. He points out that the discovery of so-called new forces, was nothing more than a reduction of the reality of a thing to that of another thing as if this solved some problem. This is what Hegel calls something 'having its being in another'. Like for example explaining the rise in the population of the cities by reference to the attractive force of the cities. This explains nothing. He also critiques the popular notion of *attraction and repulsion*; these are simply *forms of motion* constituted by acceleration towards a point, and to define a force – and centrifugal force is the classic example for this,

universally recognised as an illusion – to explain away that acceleration, is a non-resolution of the problem.

A modern day example of this positivistic pseudo-science would be Francis Fukuyama's discovery of a 'drive to recognition', supposedly located in the human soul which drives people to do all sorts of things in search of 'recognition'. All the Freudian inventions come under the same rubric.

In the sphere of Being it's just one damn thing after another

So, in summary, the Doctrine of Being can only go as far as sorting objects according to their attributes. This is because in the Doctrine of Being we have an observer perspective, there is no self-consciousness in the formation of the object. Attributes are inessential however; subjects may take or leave attributes and still be what they were. As far as we can go is Measure; that is to say, for any given object, we have its measure, between this and that size, this or that colour, to be found in the following parts of the world, and so on and so forth. This is the measure of things and it is as far as we can go with Being. To go beyond this requires some reflection: what are the essential features as opposed to the inessential features? what is real and what is only apparent? what is in the eye of the beholder and what is genuinely objective? In the Doctrine of Being, prior to and independently of reflection, we cannot answer these questions. This is the stuff of opinion polls, sociological surveys and pseudo-scientific quantitative research. Science which never gets to the essence of the thing, science which is never able to grasp the thing immanently, in its own terms.

That is why in the sphere of Being, it's always just one damn thing after another. You can take an opinion poll every day, and all you get is the Government's approval rating for today, the next day, the next day, and so on. Just one damn thing after another. To get any more than that, you have to have some theory about what is going on, and that is not given in your "observations," in your

Qualities and Quantities

Working in the sphere of Being, *the point is* lack of reflection, we strive to be objective and to *not* introduce our preconceptions into measurements. But of course that is always asking the impossible, Quantities and Qualities are always theory-laden, and that takes us to the Doctrine of Essence.

In terms of shapes of consciousness, in the sphere of Being we are talking about social practices and forms of representation and lines of thought which are happening, but they are happening under obsolete headings or under yet-to-be-

coined names, so to speak. People are just trying to manage their lives, and have no thought of the nature of full-time university study or the reasons for its demise.

Introduction to Hegel's Logic, Andy Blunden, 2007 [Lecture 6]

The Doctrine of Essence: Mediation or the Truth of Being

Identity, difference, diversity, opposition, contradiction and ground

Hegel says that the Doctrine of Essence is the most difficult part of the Logic; it could be argued that in fact the Third Book is more difficult, but the Second Book is the most enjoyable and everyone will be able to relate this part of the Logic to real issues in social life. You will also find that the relations found here are recapitulated at a later stage.

Essence is about a new shape of consciousness or form of social practice becoming self-conscious. It is all about those phases in the emergence of a social movement when people have not yet quite figured out who they are, still searching for identity. What is given in the sphere of Being is just as it is, but with more and more reflection, diversity comes to light, contradictory explanations present themselves, responses to the situation repeatedly prove unrealistic or self-defeating, and shown to have been based on wrong conceptions of the situation. Essence is to do with the whole range of logical forms that are tested out during this complex and contradictory process of an emergent form of social practice arriving at an adequate conception of itself.

The very first moments of Essence, called the moments of Reflection, are maxims which express those first glimpses of the self-consciousness of a social practice.

The first moment of reflection is Identity:

“The maxim of *Identity*, reads: Everything is identical with itself, $A = A$: and negatively, A cannot at the same time be A and Not- A .” (*Shorter Logic* §115)

This is like when a group of people come together for the first time, and you will often hear people say things like: “We’re all here for the same reason,” or “We all know why we’re here,” and amongst those who study group dynamics this is

sometimes called the stage of Politeness, because everyone is at pains to avoid difference and celebrate identity. It can be likened to the first stages of the Women's Movement when women emphasised the idea that all women suffered from the same problems, and obliterated differences of class, ethnicity and so on.

But this maxim is not only easily subject to critique, but in any emergent formation of consciousness, it invariably *is* subject to critique. As part of the very celebration of identity, people celebrate the Diversity of people who have been brought together under the same measure. Hegel observes:

“Maxim of *Diversity*: To ask ‘How Identity comes to *Difference*’ assumes that Identity as mere abstract Identity is something of itself, and Difference also something else equally independent ... Diversity has, like Identity, been transformed into a maxim: ‘Everything is various or different’: or ‘There are no two things completely like each other.’
(*Shorter Logic* §116n)

So the essential identity of the group is expressed in their diversity, but the essence of this diversity invariably turns out to be Difference. “We are such a diverse group, all interested in the same problem, and we will all be able to contribute in our own way,” people might say.

But this is wishful thinking. Essential difference means Opposition. This is reminiscent of that phase in the Women's Movement which underlay the emergence of so-called Third Wave feminism, that not only are women diverse and different, but some women have interests *opposed* to those of other women. This is also associated with the stage when differences in an emergent social movement begin to take on the form of opposing groups and perspectives.

Essential opposition arises from the bringing together of the opposition with the original identity – not just ships in different oceans, but *Contradiction*. If we are all fighting for the same thing, but we have opposite claims, then this has to be resolved. Contradiction is different from opposing views on a matter because the opposite poles of contradiction are *incompatible*, and a *power struggle* must ensue. Essential contradiction is Ground, and Hegel explains:

“The maxim of **Ground** runs thus: Everything has its Sufficient Ground: that is, the true essentiality of any thing is not the predication of it as identical with itself, or as different (various), or merely positive, or merely negative, but as having its Being in an other, which, being the self-same, is its essence.” (*Shorter Logic* §121)

Contradiction must be resolved if the project is to continue towards a concept of itself, and both sides of the contradiction, must bring forward the *Grounds* of their position and argue their case. In this way the essential Ground of the contradiction itself can be brought to light, both theses be affirmed, and forms the basis for a provisional self-definition of the Thing. This is the really productive phase of Essence.

One of the truisms of this kind of work is that as a campaign grows it not only passes through these various stages, which have been categorized differently by different theorists, but every meeting, or every time a new person joins, the whole process has to be recapitulated, at least in a telescoped form. The same is true of how we should read Hegel's *Logic*. The processes are elaborated in the *Logic* one after the other, but in the development of a formation of consciousness, all these processes are continuing one inside the other, compounding each other, rather than just succeeding one after another.

Another point about Reflection which is worth recalling at this point. When a social formation reflects on itself, we have what is newly emergent in the sphere of Being reflected in the categories and ideas of an earlier moment. That is why the result is contradictory, and because the process is continuing, compounding itself, these contradictions, and the continual movement from identity to essential identity, from diversity to essential diversity, from difference to essential difference and from contradiction to the essence of contradiction which is ground, this process is continuous.

The Thing: dialectic of Matter and Form

These are the moments of Reflection, the basic form of reflection which generates the contradictions to be resolved in the process of Essence and the formation of a new Concept. The first stage of Essence, Reflection is also called the Thing, which is the dialectic of *Matter and Form*.

The Thing is the first step at self-definition as a distinct entity with various properties. According to a trend of the times, self-subsistent qualities were referred to as 'Matters', and this provides the opportunity for Hegel to present a critique of the positivistic practice of discovering new Matters. Let us not go back further than phlogiston, the matter of heat, after which we had electrical and magnetic flux, ether that carried light waves, and so on. This process of inventing Matters to continue the pretence of having explained some phenomenon ought not to be just dismissed; 'discovery' of a matter may be a legitimate step in the understanding of a phenomenon. We have a continual procession of genes which explain human behaviour, newly discovered diseases with unknown etiology which explain social

problems, an unending series of subatomic particles which rationalize practices in the domain of experimental physics. The point Hegel is making here is that saying that heat is caused by the loss of phlogiston or that the increase in suicide is due to the spread of depression *explain nothing*. But the naming of a new syndrome or new matter or whatever, is a step towards the development of an adequate concept of the thing. Further reflection on supposed differences located in different Matters, will eventually resolve into a *practical* distinction.

From here, Hegel enters into a critique of the notion of Matter itself.

“Matter, being the immediate unity of existence with itself, is also indifferent towards specific character. Hence the numerous diverse matters coalesce into the one Matter, or into existence under the reflective characteristic of identity. In contrast to this one Matter these distinct properties and their external relation which they have to one another in the thing, constitute the Form – the reflective category of difference, but a difference which exists and is a totality.

“This one featureless Matter is also the same as the Thing-in-itself was.”
(Shorter Logic §128)

In other words, the logic of the discovery of Matters is that at various points, Matters are resolved into Forms of one and the same Matter, and this process continues to the point where everything is just a form of one and the same abstract, indifferent Matter, just like the Thing-in-Itself of Kantian philosophy, beyond and outside experience, just a blank substratum of existence. Matter is a philosophical abstraction representing everything that is outside of and independent of thought, just like the Thing-in-itself; it can *explain* nothing because it is a nothing.

This brings us to the Kantian Philosophy which Hegel identifies with Appearance.

Appearance: dialectic of Content and Form

The second Division of the Doctrine of Essence is Appearance, which is the dialectic of *Form* and *Content*. The claim of Kantianism is that Appearance is absolutely separated from the Thing-in-Itself. Hegel’s aim is to refute this and show how the Thing-in-Itself is given in Appearance, there is a continual movement from the Thing-in-Itself into Appearance and no hard and fast line between appearance and the thing-in-itself.

“The Essence must appear or shine forth. Its shining or reflection in it is the suspension and translation of it to immediacy, which, while as

reflection-into-self it is matter or subsistence, is also form, reflection-on-something-else, a subsistence which sets itself aside. To show or shine is the characteristic by which essence is distinguished from Being – by which it is essence; and it is this show which, when it is developed, shows itself, and is Appearance. Essence accordingly is not something beyond or behind appearance, but – just because it is the essence which exists – the existence is *Appearance*.” (*Shorter Logic* §131)

The point is that Appearance is objective too, just as much as the content of Reflection is objective, and Hegel says that Kant’s mistake was to put Appearance solely on the subjective side. But Existence and Appearance are stages in the self-determination of a shape of consciousness.

Appearance for Hegel is the domain of laws; so, in the flux of things, as they enter Essence as reflected Beings, as a continual flux of *Existence* (the first division of Appearance), Appearance is what remains stable in that flux. So Appearance is the *correlation* or the relation of essential Existence. This is not just a subjective process.

Hegel describes Appearance as dialectic of Form and Content, the transformation of form into content and vice versa, the repulsion of form by content, and the search of a content for its adequate form, and so on.

“Form and content are a pair of terms frequently employed by the reflective understanding, especially with a habit of looking on the content as the essential and independent, the form on the contrary as the unessential and dependent.” (*Shorter Logic* §133n)

Every content must have a form, every form must have a content, but form and content may be at odds with one another. Like a campaign against the harmful effects of drugs which takes the form of a ‘war’. So it is certainly wrong to say that form is indifferent to its content or that content is indifferent to form. When a content and its form come into conflict with one another, then we can see their reciprocal *revulsion*. Like a person who is appointed to the wrong job – a kind of explosion can result. In order for the content to show itself, it has to find a form in which it is adequately expressed, for it is form that appears; but neither is less essential than the other. The search of a content for an adequate form, the struggle for a content to realize itself in an appropriate form, brings us to Actuality.

What we are looking at here is a new project or form of social practice finding a form in which it can be conscious of itself. A content must exist in some form, so if we are looking at an emergent social practice that is only beginning to reflect on

itself, and for which there is as yet no adequate concept, then so long as an adequate form has not been found for it, the relevant shape of consciousness will be mistaken for something else, that is, be expressed in a false form, and as a result, will be distorted and misunderstood. If we are dealing with a reality, the content will shed an inadequate form, and go on shedding forms, until a form adequate to the content is arrived at. The content then appears. The way Hegel looks at this is that the Content has found its true Form. The skeptic could say that the content which lies behind the form at any given moment is unknown and inaccessible. But content without a form is meaningless; the dialectic of content and form is a process, and content shows itself in form. When we see that the content is itself active, and that the relation between form and content is not an arbitrary or subjective one, but that the content ultimately shows itself in some form, then the line between existence and appearance is broken down. Existence passes into Appearance and Content passes into Form, continuously.

The content is accessible only through the form in which it is manifested. Appearance is the correlation of form and content, because at any given moment, content and form are not identical. This is the analysis which Hegel makes of what is called *law*. The formulation of a law indicates on the one hand that we haven't got to the content, but on the other hand, we can describe the way the content is manifested. That's why the dialectic of form and content is described as the 'world of appearances'.

Actuality: dialectic of Cause and Effect, Reciprocity

The third and last division of Essence is Actuality. Actuality is the dialectic of Cause and Effect, and its subdivisions are Substance, Causality and Reciprocity. In this stage, the emergent shape of consciousness is still yet to find an adequate Notion of itself, but is becoming more and more concrete, implicating every aspect of social life. In this section of the Logic, Hegel uses the opportunity to make a critique of a range of misconceptions to do with Freedom and Necessity, Blind Necessity, Free Will, the maxim that "Anything is possible," Causality and so on.

In Actuality, Essence and Existence have become identical and this identity is immediate; every aspect of Being has been incorporated in Reflection, and is part of the picture, so to speak. All the myriad of things and events around us, everything which is existent, is intelligible. So Hegel argues against the counterposing of the Ideal and the Actual. He conceives of Actuality, not as senseless and unintelligible, and the opposite of the ideal, but on the contrary, *everything that is actual, must in that measure be rational*, that is to say, intelligible. This conception of the world of indefinitely complex seeming contingencies, as nevertheless intelligible, is summed up in the maxim "All that is real is rational; all that is rational is real." The converse

of this maxim is the dictum: “*All that exists deserves to perish*,” (Goethe, *Faust*) for not everything that exists is rational, and those elements of reality which have no basis in Reason, he says, sooner or later pass will away. He calls this conception: infinitely *intelligible reality* – Substance, and he associates Substance with Spinoza.

This myriad of relations manifested in Actuality as Substance, is made sense of by the relation of Cause and Effect, which according to Hegel is a limited point of view, which science must transcend. In Hegel’s view, to say that something is caused by something else, is to say that it has its being in another, and therefore fails to capture the Notion of the thing itself, because the question of its existence has been simply moved to something else, its *cause* and its conditions.

An emergent social movement concretizes itself through all of its actions having some effect in the world, and ricocheting back on itself, and through the reactions of others, the emergent movement gets a more objective understanding of itself.

The relation of Causality sets up an infinite regress, and the chain of cause to effect, which in turn becomes cause, etc., etc., which eventually bends back on itself. There seems to be no proper starting point, everything is the cause of everything else and the effect of something else. This conclusion, that a certain set of circumstances do not have any one of those circumstances as the cause of the others, but all together constitute a reciprocal relation of causation, is called Reciprocity. It is often regarded as the end of the investigation. If poverty is the cause of unemployment, urban decay, poor health and dysfunctional schools, each of which is in turn the cause of unemployable workers, bringing up unruly children in a decaying neighbourhood, endlessly extending the cycle of disadvantage, then there is nothing more to be said. To finger any one point in this complex as the cause would be foolish; so says Reciprocity. Hegel exemplifies this with the question of the nature of the Spartans:

“To make, for example, the manners of the Spartans the cause of their constitution and their constitution conversely the cause of their manners, may no doubt be in a way correct. But, as we have comprehended neither the manners nor the constitution of the nation, the result of such reflections can never be final or satisfactory. The satisfactory point will be reached only when these two, as well as all other, special aspects of Spartan life and Spartan history are seen to be founded in this notion.”
(*Shorter Logic* §156n)

This failure of Reciprocity leads us to the doorstep of the Notion. Only by grasping Actuality and the infinite network of cause and effect under an adequate Notion of

what is going on, can the basis for a real science be created. Otherwise we remain mired in the conundrums of Reciprocity.

Let's look at how Hegel deals with the notion of Free Will.

“When more narrowly examined, free choice is seen to be a contradiction, to this extent, that its form and content stand in antithesis. The matter of choice is given, and known as a content dependent not on the will itself, but on outward circumstances. In reference to such a given content, freedom lies only in the form of choosing, which, as it is only a freedom in form, may consequently be regarded as freedom only in supposition. On an ultimate analysis it will be seen that the same outwardness of circumstances, on which is founded the content that the will finds to its hand, can alone account for the will giving its decision for the one and not the other of the two alternatives.”
(Shorter Logic §145n)

The narrow view of free will, associated with this stage in the development of the idea, is that of making a decision between this or that option, but misses the question of where the options *come from* and the supposedly free will was left only the task of figuring out which of the given options is the better. So Free Will turns out to be an illusion, but only because of the limited terms, that is of decision theory, in which it is conceived.

This brings us to the notion of “freedom and necessity.” The following observation presages Hegel's views on the State.

“A good man is aware that the tenor of his conduct is essentially obligatory and necessary. But this consciousness is so far from making any abatement from his freedom, that without it, real and reasonable freedom could not be distinguished from arbitrary choice – a freedom which has no reality and is merely potential. A criminal, when punished, may look upon his punishment as a restriction of his freedom. Really the punishment is not a foreign constraint to which he is subjected, but the manifestation of his own act. In short, man is most independent when he knows himself to be determined by the absolute idea throughout.”
(Shorter Logic §158n)

Which leads to the famous aphorism about Freedom and Necessity, that Freedom is the understanding of Necessity, or that “Freedom is the truth of Necessity.”

Freedom in fact essentially *depends on* Necessity. The truth of Substance is the Notion, Freedom concrete and positive. In a realm of arbitrariness and irrational contingency, there could be no freedom.

“Necessity indeed, *qua* necessity, is far from being freedom: yet freedom presupposes necessity, and contains it as an unsubstantial element in itself. (*Shorter Logic* §158n)

Development is the struggle of opposites which do not disappear

Before completing this section, we should reflect on the form of movement in Essence. What we see throughout Essence is pairs of opposing determinations: Matter and Form, Form and Content, Existence and Essence, Positive and Negative, Likeness and Unlikeness, Whole and Parts, Inward and Outward, Possibility and Contingency, Freedom and Necessity, Cause and Effect, only some of which we have touched on here. The successive concretization of the growing self-consciousness of a project takes place through this succession of opposing determinations. In each case the opposition between them is made relative, as the counterposing of the opposite determinations leads to a deeper conception which comprehends the opposition within its new terms. So the opposing determinations do not disappear, but continue and in specific circumstances may come to the fore again. But in the process of Essence, we see a succession of polar oppositions, and as each opposition is sublated, their opposition is relativized and pushed into the background by new axes of polarization.

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